

SCRIPTURE STUDIES

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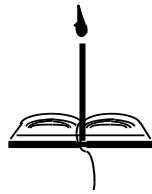
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Old Testament Study: Exodus 2:11-22

From Egyptian to Hebrew

¹¹One day, after Moses had grown up, he went out to where his own people were and watched them at their hard labor. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his own people. ¹²Glancing this way and that and seeing no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. ¹³The next day he went out and saw two Hebrews fighting. He asked the one in the wrong, "Why are you hitting your fellow Hebrew?"

¹⁴The man said, "Who made you ruler and judge over us? Are you thinking of killing me as you killed the Egyptian?" Then Moses was afraid and thought, "What I did must have become known."

¹⁵When Pharaoh heard of this, he tried to kill Moses, but Moses fled from Pharaoh and went to live in Midian, where he sat down by a well. ¹⁶Now a priest of Midian had seven daughters, and they came to draw water and fill the troughs to water their father's flock. ¹⁷Some shepherds came along and drove them away, but Moses got up and came to their rescue and watered their flock.

¹⁸When the girls returned to Reuel their father, he asked them, "Why have you returned so early today?"

¹⁹They answered, "An Egyptian rescued us from the shepherds. He even drew water for us and watered the flock."

²⁰"And where is he?" he asked his daughters. "Why did you leave him? Invite him to have something to eat."

²¹Moses agreed to stay with the man, who gave his daughter Zipporah to Moses in marriage. ²²Zipporah gave birth to a son, and Moses named him Gershom, saying, "I have become an alien in a foreign land."

The history of Moses continues: "One day, after Moses had grown up, he went out to where his own people were and watched them at their hard labor. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his

own people. Glancing this way and that and seeing no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand” (vs. 11). It is a little frustrating for us to see the words, “...after Moses had grown up...” We would have loved to have more information about what happened to Moses as he was growing up in the Egyptian palace. But, alas, we are told nothing else about Moses’ childhood here in Exodus. However, in the book of Acts, we are told by Stephen that Pharaoh’s daughter “**brought [Moses] up as her own son**”, and that he “**was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action**” (Acts 7:22). In fact, Moses’ first forty years were spent as an Egyptian. “Egypt seems the least likely place for God to start training a leader, but God’s ways are not our ways” [Wiersbe, 14].

At some point, Moses, though brought up as an Egyptian, realized that he was a Hebrew. We are not told when or how this happened. He may have known all his life that he was the natural child of Hebrew parents; or quite possibly, as movie renditions tend to dramatically depict, his Hebrew parentage was revealed to him after he was grown. Whatever the case, Moses seemed to have been shielded and separated from the children of Israel, for here we are told that, as a grown man, Moses “**went out to where his own people were and watched them at their hard labor. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his own people. Glancing this way and that and seeing no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand**” (vs. 11–12). At this point in time, Moses apparently considered himself more a Hebrew than an Egyptian. In fact, Stephen tells us that a motive for killing the Egyptian was that Moses saw himself as being a God-appointed savior for the Israelites: “**Moses thought his people would realize that God was using him to rescue them, but they did not**” (Acts 7:25). “One day he made a courageous decision to help his people, even if it meant losing his noble position as the adopted son of the royal princess. The pleasures and treasures of Egypt faded from view as he saw himself helping to liberate God’s chosen people” [Wiersbe, 15]. This was a great act of faith by Moses, as we are told in the book of Hebrews: “**By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward**” (Heb. 11:24–26).

Moses found out the next day that the Egyptians were not the only problem that the Israelites faced. The Israelites could not get along with each other: “**The next day he went out and saw two Hebrews fighting**” (vs. 13). In the very place they are persecuted by the Egyptians, they persecute each other. This is typical of many of us. Even if we got rid of bad external influences, we would find that there remained a problem amongst and within ourselves. “When God raises up instruments of salva-

tion for the church they will find enough to do, not only with oppressing Egyptians, to restrain them, but with quarrelsome Israelites, to reconcile them" [Henry, on vs. 13].

Moses tried to bring peace to the situation: **"He asked the one in the wrong, 'Why are you hitting your fellow Hebrew?' The man said, 'Who made you ruler and judge over us? Are you thinking of killing me as you killed the Egyptian?'"** (vss. 13–14). The man that Moses addressed did not take Moses' peacemaking kindly. This is not unusual. "For in proportion to a man's evil disposition, and to the greatness of his offense, is his rage under admonition, and his violence in altercation; wherefore, whoever undertakes to restrain the wicked must expect to meet with these indignities" [Calvin, on vs. 14].

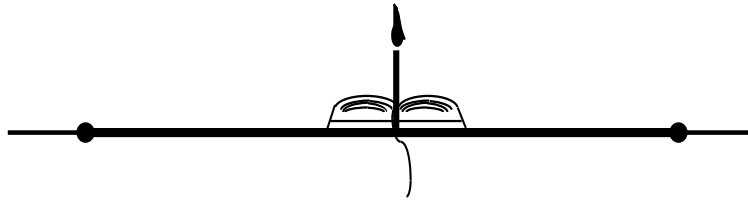
The man's retort to Moses was ironic: **"Who made you ruler and judge over us?"** God had not done so, yet; but of course, Moses would be the ruler and judge of the children of Israel. The man's retort was also inappropriate. Moses was not playing the role of **"ruler"** or **"judge"**, but was playing the role of a faithful brother, giving admonition where it was warranted. Moses was performing "a duty, which the law of charity demands of every one, addressing the men who strove together as a peacemaker, and exhorting them both to be reconciled, though he especially blames the wrongdoer. This was not peculiar to Moses, but the common duty of all believers, when the innocent are harshly treated, to take their part, and as far as possible to interpose, lest the stronger should prevail" [Calvin, on vs. 13]. "A man needs no great authority for the giving of a friendly reproof, it is an act of kindness; yet this man interprets it as an act of dominion, and represents his reprover as imperious and assuming. Thus when people dislike good discourse, or a seasonable admonition, they will call it *preaching*, as if a man could not speak a word for God and against sin except that he took too much upon him" [Henry, on vs. 14].

Moses' killing of the Egyptian was a significant event in Moses' life, for it served to permanently break Moses' tie to the Egyptians: **"When Pharaoh heard of this, he tried to kill Moses, but Moses fled from Pharaoh and went to live in Midian, where he sat down by a well"** (vs. 15). So began Moses' exile. As we have seen, Israel was not ready for a deliverer. Nor was Moses ready to be the deliverer. God used his time in exile to prepare him for the great role of leadership he would assume, as deliverer of the children of Israel from the bonds of the Egyptians. "God ordered this for wise ends. Things were not yet ripe for Israel's deliverance. The measure of Egypt's iniquity was not yet full; the Hebrews were not sufficiently humbled, nor were they yet increased to such a multitude as God designed: Moses is to be farther fitted for the service" [Wesley, on vs. 15]. "Like Joseph's thirteen years as a slave in Egypt and Paul's three years' hiatus after his conversion (Gal. 1:16-17), Moses' forty years of waiting and working prepared him for a lifetime of

faithful ministry. God doesn't lay hands suddenly on His servants but takes time to equip them for their work" [Wiersbe, 16]. "Egypt accomplished him for a scholar, a gentleman, a statesman, a soldier, all which accomplishments would be afterwards of use to him; but yet lacketh he one thing, in which the court of Egypt could not befriend him. He that was to do all by divine revelation must know, what it was to live a life of communion with God, and in this he would be greatly furthered by the retirement of a shepherd's life in Midian" [Wesley, on vs. 21].

When Moses arrived in Midian, his courage, and his heart for the oppressed, was once again demonstrated: **"Now a priest of Midian had seven daughters, and they came to draw water and fill the troughs to water their father's flock. Some shepherds came along and drove them away, but Moses got up and came to their rescue and watered their flock"** (vss. 16–17). The harassment of the daughters must have been a regular occurrence, for their father was surprised at how early they returned from watering on the day Moses came to their rescue: **"When the girls returned to Reuel their father, he asked them, 'Why have you returned so early today?'"** (vs. 18). Moses' garb, appearance and language must have led the daughters to believe that he was an Egyptian: **"They answered, 'An Egyptian rescued us from the shepherds. He even drew water for us and watered the flock'"** (vs. 19).

Moses' good deed for the priest's daughters turned into another life-changing event, for it introduced him to his wife: **"Moses agreed to stay with the man, who gave his daughter Zipporah to Moses in marriage. Zipporah gave birth to a son, and Moses named him Gershom saying, 'I have become an alien in a foreign land'"** (vss. 21–22). The name **"Gershom"** sounds like the Hebrew word for alien or stranger. By naming his son Gershom, Moses demonstrated that he missed being with his people, and showed that he did not consider Midian his true home. It's as if Moses named him thus in order to communicate to his wife and father-in-law that he would some day return to his people enslaved in Egypt.





A Classic Study: Patience in Affliction

A Classic Study by Richard Baxter (1615–1691)

[Here, we continue a reprint of excerpts from Richard Baxter's work entitled *Obedient Patience*. In each article, Mr. Baxter gives advice on how to be patient through a specific type of affliction.]—*Ed.*

The Loss of Teachers, and Suitable Means of Grace and Salvation - II

(This study is continued from the previous issue. Mr. Baxter is enumerating considerations pertaining to the loss of godly teachers)

4. When God taketh teachers from one people (before death) he usually sends them to another; and it proveth oft to the advantage of the church. When the disciples were all driven away from Jerusalem, they went preaching the gospel into all countries about. Persecution drove the apostles all over the world: it sent Paul to Rome, to preach it at the doors of Nero. When he and Barnabas were driven from one city, they carried the gospel to another. Persecution had a great hand in sending the gospel to most nations in the world that had it. Yea, the very banishment of Nestorius, Dioscorus, and such others, as heretics, for some forms of speech, had a great hand in the sending of Christianity into Persia, India, and many remote parts of the east, south, and north; and of late to New England, and other plantations in America, it was sent by the prelates and other rulers from this land. A captive maid, it is said, began the conversion of the Iberians; as Frumentius and Edesius did of the Indians (or rather, planted a ministry in Habassia, miscalled India, which before had none but lay Christians since the eunuch's days).

And every good Christian is of a public spirit, and loveth Christ's greatest interest with the greatest love, and therefore loveth the church and the word better than himself, or his native soil. Why then should we not the more patiently bear the loss of those labourers, whom God sends to do greater work abroad? Is it like that Mr. John Elliot would ever have

done half the good in England that he hath done in America? We pray that God's name may be hallowed, and His kingdom come, and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven, and England is a very little part of the earth.

5. We must have our time of rest with Christ, when we have had our time of labour. If God call home His servants to Himself, rejoice with them that there rejoice, **“and have fought a good fight, and have finished their course, and do receive the crown of righteousness”** (II Tim. 4:7); grudge them not their rest and happiness. God sent them hither to work, run, and fight, and not to reign or long abide. Remember that James, who hoped to sit next to Christ in His kingdom on earth, was so quickly taken from His apostleship; but he had his petition to be near to Christ in a better manner than he desired: and Stephen and he did more in service for Christ by the way they died, than most others do by living long. The foundation of the Church was to be laid in blood; and none is too precious for so great a work, for which Christ's blood was not too precious.

6. Ministers are not idle or useless when they are silenced: they are praying for the Church, and they are lights in the houses and company where they come, and Christ disdained not oft to preach to one woman or man; as John 4, 9, etc. And some of them publish God's truth by writing, and that to a far greater extent and number than ever they could have by voice. The word of God is not bound, when we are bound.

7. Yea, the silence and sufferings of Christ's faithful ministers, do powerfully preach: it maketh men see the evil of that proud, malignant spirit, which hateth such men, and cannot endure them. The vulgar are hardly brought to wisdom by mere words, or to know the difference between good and evil, till by sense and experience they feel and taste the several fruits. The cured blind man (see John 9) could quickly discern that God heareth not sinners, but if any man be a true worshipper of God, him He heareth; and that he must needs be of God that could open his eyes; and that therefore those men were not of God that hated and persecuted him that did so much good. The vulgar hate ungodly religious leaders far more for persecution, than for any doctrinal error in their religion. And when long experience hath assured them that the persecuted ministers preached the true gospel of Jesus Christ with great plainness, seriousness, and love to souls, and that they sought no worldly gain or honour but men's salvation, and that they lived as they preached; and when they see that it is this very sort of men that some bend their malice against, and study to extirpate, silence, and destroy; and that godliness and conscience is the intolerable enemy which they would drive out of the land; and that the most wicked, sensual, filthy, debauched, unconscionable malignants, are their agents, and the men that they employ and trust, who

will obey them before God, and against Him; this loudly tells the people what they are; and by their fruits, wolves, thorns, and thistles are known: they can tell whose servants they are by their works, better than by their livery, clothing, or names. To hinder the gospel and good of souls, and make the godly hated, scorned, persecuted people, and cause men of no conscience to be better thought of, is the devil's work, yea, his chiefest work in the world. And they are so far his servants that do it, by what names or titles soever they be called. And as human nature hateth cruelty, and Christianity hateth ungodliness, malignity, and persecution, so these works do effectually preach to the people, and tell them who are their friends, and who their foes; what to love, and what to hate.

8. God will do His work by others when we are dead and gone. Successive generations must partake of His mercies, and do His service here, and not the same men still continue. And when we grow dull with age and weakness, young men of greater vigour and alacrity shall succeed us.

9. And it hath hitherto been God's way to carry on His work with great changes and variety in the world. As He causeth winter and summer, nights and days, so His Church hath had hitherto its turns of prosperity and adversity. And prosperity hath increased the number of Christians, and adversity hath tried them, and increased the grace of those that persevere.

10. It is more our diligence and faithful use of means, by which we grow in grace, than by the enjoyment of the best, if we be slothful under it: and sometimes God seeth that fullness breedeth wantonness and loathing, and like foolish children we play with our meat, or quarrel about it; and then it is time to take it away, and let fasting help us to a better appetite. I have known those that when they lived among the ignorant, and could hardly hear a good sermon without going divers miles for it, and hardly borrow a good book, and rarely speak with a serious Christian, were so hungry, affectionate, and diligent, that they evidently profited very much; but when they came where they had variety, choice, and fullness of teachers, books, and religious converse, some grew more notional, worldly, and cold; and some self-conceited, proud, and quarrelsome; and some downright heretical or schismatical. And do we need any more to justify the afflicting providence of God in taking away, and silencing ministers, than the sad review of our common miscarriages? Have not pious ministers been disgracefully guilty of overvaluing their own judgments and opinions, and laying life and death on words they understood not, and raising hatred, censures, and contempt against their brethren that differed from them, though wiser and better than themselves? We have heard with grief what unchristian contentions there have long been in all lands, among Protestants called Lutherans and Calvinists, and how oft the former have persecuted the latter. We have heard of late, how some repre-

sent Calvinists, as if they were as bad as heathens; and some in the pulpits say, 'The religion of the Arminians is the religion of the devil.' If none of these speak the words of truth or charity, nor know either what they say, or what manner of spirit they are of; is it not just with God to silence them all? What dreadful work hath the interest and controversies of dioceses, liturgy, and ceremonies here made! And when we cannot bear with one another, it is just with God to bear with none of us. How long have episcopal, presbyterians, independents, and anabaptists been censuring, condemning, and some of them persecuting one another; and been teaching the people to believe that those that they accuse deserve it! And if we thus show that we all deserve it, how can we open our mouths against God's justice if He reject us all?

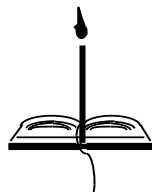
11. And when God taketh away health, strength, and life from the aged, they must be thankful that they enjoyed them so long, and consider how they used them while they had them; so when He taketh away ministers and public helps, we must be thankful that we had so long peaceable enjoyment of them, and consider whether it be not for our abuse, that we are deprived of them.

12. God is not tied to outward helps, though He tie us to them while we may have them. If He take them from us, He can give us that grace in our secret closets, which we had in the public assemblies; and we may expect His assistance and blessing in any means which He appointeth us to use.

Bearing Affliction

"For confusion arises within us, not from the nature of circumstances, but from the infirmity of our minds; for if we were thus affected by reason of what befalls us, then, (as we all sail the same sea, and it is impossible to escape waves and spray,) all men must needs be troubled; but if there are some who stand beyond the influence of the storm and the raging sea, then it is clear that it is not circumstances which make the storm, but the condition of our own mind. If therefore we so order the mind that it may bear all things contentedly, we shall have no storm nor even a ripple, but always a clear calm."

-- Chrysostom



New Testament Study: Matthew 14:22-36

Jesus Walks on Water

²²Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of Him to the other side, while He dismissed the crowd. ²³After He had dismissed them, He went up on a mountainside by Himself to pray. When evening came, He was there alone, ²⁴but the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.

²⁵During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. ²⁶When the disciples saw Him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear.

²⁷But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."

²⁸"Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water."

²⁹"Come," He said.

Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. ³⁰But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"

³¹Immediately Jesus reached out His hand and caught him. "You of little faith," He said, "why did you doubt?"

³²And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. ³³Then those who were in the boat worshiped Him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

³⁴When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret. ³⁵And when the men of that place recognized Jesus, they sent word to all the surrounding country. People brought all their sick to Him ³⁶and begged Him to let the sick just touch the edge of His cloak, and all who touched Him were healed."

Earlier in the day, Jesus had heard of the death John the Baptist. He had tried to **“withdraw to a solitary place”** (Matt. 14:13), presumably to mourn the death of His friend and to pray, but the crowds prevented Him from doing so. Jesus **“had compassion on them and healed their sick”** (Matt. 14:14). He also performed a magnificent miracle, and fed the crowd of thousands.

Having tended to the needs of the people, Jesus still desired to be alone, and so: **“Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of Him to the others side, while He dismissed the crowd”** (vs. 22). Dismissing the crowd after such a grand miracle must have been a difficult task. And it seems that the disciples themselves did not want to leave Jesus, for He had to compel them to go.

Jesus was able to find solitude, but the disciples ran into trouble: **“After He had dismissed them, He went up on a mountainside by Himself to pray. When evening came, He was there alone, but the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it”** (vss. 23–24). Note that the disciples were not exempt from trouble just because the Lord sent them on their journey.

“During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake” (vs. 25). “To our poor, weak minds, the whole event is utterly incomprehensible” [Ryle, 167]. We simply cannot imagine such power over the elements. This miracle demonstrated that there is nothing in all creation that is not under Jesus’ control. “Christ is Lord of Sea and Land, and can make way unto His people’s relief, through the most stormy sea, no impediment can under Him, nor hold Him from His disciple’s society” [Dickson, on vs. 26].

The sight of Jesus walking on the water understandably astounded the disciples. So much so that they did not recognize that it was Jesus: **“When the disciples saw Him walking on the lake, they were terrified. ‘It’s a ghost,’ they said, and cried out in fear”** (vs. 26). In fact, it seems that the sight of Jesus walking on the water terrified the disciples more than the fierce winds and waves.

Jesus sought without delay to calm their fears: **“But Jesus immediately said to them: ‘Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid’”** (vs. 27). One of the most oft spoken commands of our Lord to His disciples is **“Don’t be afraid.”** “Wheresoever Christ shows Himself present, there is no reason to be afraid of any trouble or danger, for He is able to deliver His own in whatsoever strait” [Dickson, on vs. 27].

Peter showed boldness, and desired to join His Lord on the water: **“‘Lord, if it’s you,’ Peter replied, ‘tell me to come to you on the water.’ ‘Come,’ He said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus”** (vss. 28–29). “What a wonderful

proof was this of our Lord's divinity! To walk on the sea Himself was a mighty miracle; but to enable a poor weak disciple to do the same, was a mightier miracle still" [Ryle, 168]. "We usually remember that Peter's faith failed and that Jesus drew attention to this. But we should bear in mind that it took courage for the apostle to venture on the water at all" [Morris, on vs. 29].

But was Peter ready to do such a thing? **"But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, 'Lord, save me!'"** (vs. 30). "It is safest to ponder all that faith is to meet with, if we can overtake it, before we enter in the conflict with difficulties; for Peter should have prepared against the wind, as well as against the sea, and waters" [Dickson, on vs. 30]. We can learn a lesson from Peter's experience. We should take care before plunging into any activity. We should prayerfully seek the Lord's timing, rather than dictate to the Lord our timing. We should also make sure that the activity is suitable to our gifts and abilities. "When men mistake the measure of their own strength and gifts, they are ready to seek a calling ere it be given them, and to enterprise things too hard for them" [Dickson, on vs. 28].

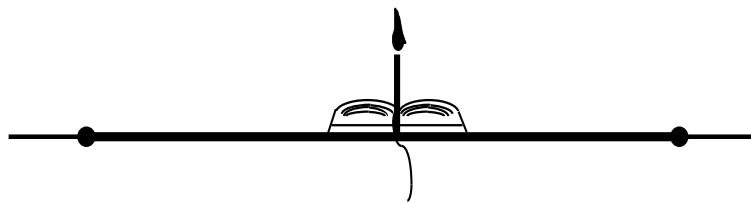
Ah, but we often mistake the soundness of our abilities. "Sometimes peril presseth a man more when he is in the dangers, than before; and a man may seem stout before the experience of the danger, who shall prove feeble in it: men know not readily their own weakness, till they be put to a proof; Peter doubted nothing to walk on the sea, till now" [Dickson, on vs. 30]. Peter's faith was strong enough to get him out of the boat, but not strong enough to persevere through the storm. "How many there are who have faith enough to take the first step in following Christ, but not faith enough to go on as they began. They take fright at the trials and dangers which seem to be in their way. They look at the enemies that surround them, and the difficulties that seem likely to beset their path: they look at them more than at Jesus, and at once their feet begin to sink; their hearts faint within them; their hope vanishes away: their comforts disappear. And why is all this? Christ is not altered: their enemies are not greater than they were. It is just because, like Peter, they have ceased to look to Jesus, and have given way to unbelief. They are taken up with thinking about their enemies, instead of thinking about Christ. May we lay this to heart, and learn wisdom!" [Ryle, 169]. "When men look more to the dangers than to God (who called them to it), no wonder that their faith be shaken: for Peter seeth the wind too much, and Christ's presence too little" [Dickson, on vs. 30].

At least Peter knew well what to do when his faith wavered: he **"cried out, 'Lord, save me!'"** "Whatsoever be our danger, let Christ's power be exalted, as sufficient to help us" [Dickson, vs. 30]. Jesus was quick to respond to Peter's cry for help: **"Immediately Jesus reached**

out His hand and caught him” (vs. 31). Then Jesus gave Peter a mild rebuke: **“You of little faith, He said, ‘why did you doubt?’”** (vs. 31). “To doubt where we have warrant to believe, is worthy of reproof” [Dickson, on vs. 31]. Jesus’ question, **“Why did you doubt?”**, “helps both Peter and the reader recognize that doubts and fears quickly disappear before a strict inquiry into their cause” [Carson, on vs. 31]. “He had been armed with Christ’s command and already knew His power, but he fell away from that twofold firmness into a vain and perverse fear” [Calvin, on vs. 31].

“And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down” (vs. 32). “It is well to be safe in a storm, but more pleasant to find the calm return and the hurricane end” [Spurgeon, on vs. 32]. Those in the boat were amazed by all the happenings: **“Then those who were in the boat worshiped Him, saying, ‘Truly you are the Son of God’”** (vs. 33). “Storm and struggle make us enjoy more the calm that follows, and appreciate more highly the Lord who delivers us” [Broadus, 331]. From their response, we see that the experience in the boat made more of an impression on the disciples than did the feeding of the five thousand. “Delivery out of imminent death, speaketh more of God’s power to the humble soul, than the greatest works doth speak unto the secure, as the delivery of the disciples from the raging sea, maketh them more sensible of Christ’s Godhead, than the miraculous feeding of five thousand with so few loaves in the wilderness; for now it is, and not till now, that they say, **‘Truly you are the Son of God’**” [Dickson, vs. 33].

When they reached the other side of the lake, Jesus’ busy life, full of works of service, continued: **“When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret. And when the men of that place recognized Jesus, they sent word to all the surrounding country. People brought all their sick to Him and begged Him to let the sick just touch the edge of His cloak, and all who touched Him were healed”** (vss. 34–36). The Gospel writers, for the most part, recount certain specific episodes of Jesus’ works of service. What we learn from passages such as verse 34 through 36 is that there were innumerable more episodes that have not been told to us: innumerable more magnificent and astoundingly miraculous works; innumerable more lives that were changed through the touch of Jesus’ healing hand.





A Topical Study: Self-Examination

A Discourse of Self-Examination, pt. 4 by Stephen Charnock (1628-1680)

Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test? (II Cor. 13:5, NIV).

I shall, lastly, give you some directions about this duty of self-examination:

1. *Acquaint yourselves with those marks that are proper only to a true Christian.* Overlook all those that are common with the hypocrite, such as outward profession, constant attendances, some affections in duties. Let us not judge ourselves by outward acts: An actor is not a prince, because he acts the part of a prince. But we must judge ourselves by what we are in our retirements, in our hearts. He only is a good man, and doth good, that doth it from a principle of goodness within, and not from fear of laws, or to gain a good opinion in the world. Grace is of that nature, that it cannot possibly have any by-end. As it is the immediate birth of God, so it doth immediately respect God in its actings. In the very nature of it, it aims at God, as to love Him, believe in Him. The great accusation the devil brings against Job was that he served not God for nought, that his service was not sincere, that he acted a righteous part for his own end, and to preserve his worldly prosperity (see Job 1:9–10). But if our ends be right, and our actions in the course of them according to His rule, if our hearts in them respect God's Law and His glory, how will the devil's arrows drop down as shot against a brazen wall? The inward bent, and the habitual delight and affection of our hearts, is chiefly to be eyed, whether they are in God, or in other things. This was the apostle's way of trial: **"I delight in the Law of God after the inward man"** (Rom. 7:22). Begin self-examination at the lowest step of true and sincere grace; inquire not at first into the marks of an high and towering faith, of the eminent degrees of it: this would be to put a giant's suit upon an infant's back, and judge ourselves not men, because the garments fit us not. A small beam will manifest that the sun doth peep out of a cloud; but larger ones, and more spread, evidence that it hath got a full victory. Have a right notion of true grace; and though grace be little, yet you may know it: as if a man hath a

true notion of a diamond, though never so small, he can truly say that is a diamond, as well as if it were bigger. Though a gracious spirit may not have grace enough to satisfy its desires, yet it may find grace enough to settle its soul. There may be grace enough to give a man an interest in Christ, though there be not a full strength to answer all the obligations of the Gospel. Let us examine first the truth of grace, and afterwards the height of grace. A little of the coarsest gold is more valuable than much of the finest brass. See how the habitual frame and inclination of the heart stands. A heart set upon heaven discovers the treasures of the heart to be there. See whether we have David's temper, to hate every false way; or Paul's, to have a conscience void of offense towards God, in regard of his service, as well as towards man, in regard of his converse; not to neglect anything towards God, that conscience tells us is our duty to Him. One found and undeniable mark is better than a thousand disputable ones.

2. *Let us make the word of God only our rule in trials.* This is the only impartial friend we can stick to, and therefore it ought to be made our main counselor. The Word is the principle whereby grace is wrought, and it is the medium whereby grace is known. The Word is that whereby we must judge of doctrine, *to the Law, and to the testimony*: If an angel from heaven speaks any other thing than what God hath delivered, he is not to be heard. 'Tis also the rule whereby we must judge of graces. If conscience speak anything for a man's comfort that is not according to the Word, 'tis to be silenced. If conscience presents us with anything as a grace that will not hold water before God, 'tis to be rejected in that case. Bring it to the touchstone to see if it be current coin. As we are to try other men's spirits, so our own, by this rule. 'Tis a part of man's sinful ambition to be his own judge, and so to make his own fancy his rule. The scripture-beam is like a sun-beam, it will discover the most inward, and the most minute thing (see Heb. 4:12). It will reveal the deceitful contrivances and sophistry of the heart. This Word must try us at last, 'tis to be the rule of the last judgment, to salvation or condemnation; let it be the rule of our self-judgment. 'Tis safe for us to take that rule, which God Himself will take, and take in good part whatsoever the Word saith: If it show us our evil, let us change our course; if it speak good, let us be thankful to God, and give Him the rent charge and tribute due to Him for it.

3. *Take not the first dictates of conscience.* **“He that trusts his own heart, is a fool”** (Prov. 28:26), i.e. without a diligent inquisition, 'tis not wisdom to do so; **“but he that walks wisely, shall be delivered”**: he that makes a strict inquiry into it, shall be delivered from its snares and his own fears. 'Tis a searching, examining; proving our hearts, that is required, not taking them at the first word. There may be gold at the top, and dross at the bottom. We are naturally quick of belief of those things we would have, and desire. We should be jealous of these hearts which have so often deceived us, as we are of those who have often broken their

word. Whatsoever it speaks, suspend your belief of its sentence, till you have well examined the ground and reasons why it gives in such a report. If it tells you, you are in a good state, that you are penitents, believers, have a choice love to God, an eye fixing on the glory of God as your end, bring it to the test, examine why it saith so; we have here to do with the greatest impostor, and in other things we will not give credit to a cheater. Therefore our searching often in scripture is joined with trying. We must not only search out our graces, but try whether they be of the right stamp, and have the mark of God upon them. Examination and proof must go together in this act, as they do in the text.

4. *In all implore the assistance of the Spirit of God.* Natural conscience is not enough in this case, there must be the influence of the Spirit. 'Tis God's interpreter that can only "**show unto a man his righteousness**" (Job 33:23). The sun must give light, before the glass can reflect the beams. Grace cannot be discerned, if the Spirit obscure and hide itself. In the night the beautiful colours in a room are by the darkness as it were buried from the sight; but when the sun discharges its beams into the chamber, they are enlivened, and affect our sense. There may be graces in the soul which appear not, if the Spirit withdraws His light; but when He displays Himself, they will appear in their true luster. In all our trials of ourselves, let us beg of God to try us. When David had been ransacking his heart, he would not rest in his own endeavours, but begs of God to open his heart more fully to his knowledge, and bless him with a perfect discovery of it: "**Do not I hate them which hate thee? I hate them with a perfect hatred**" (Ps. 139:21,23). I think, I conclude I do; but lest my conclusions may be wrong, do you, O God, "**search me and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts**", i.e., make my heart and thoughts visible and fully discernable to me.

5. *Let us take heed that while we examine our graces and find them, our hearts be not carried out to a resting upon them.* We may draw some comfort from them, but must check the least inclination of founding our justification upon them. Graces are signs, not causes of justification. Christ's righteousness only is our wedding garment, our graces are but as the fringes of it. Liberty is a sign the malefactor is pardoned, but it is not the cause of his pardon, but the king's merciful grant. God is a jealous God, and is likely thereto withdraw His hand, where the glory of His works shall be attributed to anything below Him, and His gifts made equal with His son: and therefore as one saith, "In our trials of ourselves we should do as men with a pair of compasses, fix one foot in the center while they move the other about the circumference"; so let our souls rest in Christ, and hold Him with one hand, while with the other we turn over the leaves of our hearts, and be inquisitive after our evidences. Our justification is not by any inherent grace, but our justification is known to us by the grace we find in ourselves.

6. *In case we find ourselves not in such a condition as we desire, let us exer-*

cise direct acts of faith. Let us not deject ourselves, and make so bad a conclusion, as Peter did, and say to Christ, **“Lord, depart from me, for I am a sinful man”** (Luke 5:8); but let us cast ourselves upon the Truth and faithfulness of God in the promise of life in Christ. Lay hold on the promise of life, as if you had not laid hold of it before. When comfort is not fetch in by reflex acts, let faith be exercised in direct acts. When there is darkness and no light, **“trusting in the name of the Lord, and staying upon God”**, is the proper business of the soul (see Isa. 50:10). We should then drink of the waters of life, groan under our sin, and go to a Savior; **“forget,”** (as Paul), **“the things that are behind, and press forward to the things which are before”** (Phil. 3:13,14). We naturally would believe God upon His deed, and trust in Him, because we find something wrought in our own souls; God therefore sometimes hides a man’s own graces from him, to draw out the soul in acts of faith, which indeed gives the most glory to God. God will be believed upon His Word, and God turns it often to the great advantage of the soul, and puts it upon the exercise of faith, when He denies it the comfortable sight of faith. In this case, we should make use of such scriptures which may foment and nourish faith, and put us upon the casting out that filth and mud in our souls which we discerned. When we can find no grace to present Christ with, we should fetch grace from him. A city of refuge is for a malefactor, a physician for the sick, and a Christ for those that groan under the burden of sin; a Christ lifted up and dying for those that are stung by the serpent.

To conclude, Let us *be frequent in this work.* Let us not neglect a privilege God hath invested us with above other creatures below us. There is nothing can reflect upon itself, inquire into the nature of its own being, but man; and shall we only resemble the beasts, to see those things which are without us, and not turn our eyes inward, and see what workmanship of God there is in our souls, and what conformity there is between us and our Creator, between us and our Redeemer? Shall we put such an affront upon ourselves, as to banish the noblest part of our souls from its proper operation? A frequent examination of ourselves would ballast our Life, keep faith and repentance fresh and vigorous. Let us take heed of a spiritual laziness, which says, **“There is a lion in the way”** (Prov. 26:13); let us remember it is necessary, and though it be difficult, it is not so in itself, but by reason of our averseness to it. The difficult may be cured by diligence; the necessity of it, and the advantages of it, should both enflame our desires to it, and increase our pains in it. Certainly there can be no more dreadful sign of no grace at all, than a neglect of trial whether we have grace or no. If we examine not ourselves, prove not ourselves whether we be in the faith, we are reprobates, i.e., unfound, insincere, not in a state of true Christianity.



A Study in Psalms: Psalm 58

Psalm 58 - Unjust Rulers

For the director of music. To the tune of "Do Not Destroy".
Of David. A *miktam*.

- ¹Do you rulers indeed speak justly?
Do you judge uprightly among men?
- ²No, in your heart you devise injustice,
and your hands mete out violence on the earth.
- ³Even from birth the wicked go astray;
from the womb they are wayward
and speak lies.
- ⁴Their venom is like the venom of a snake,
like that of a cobra that has stopped its ears,
⁵that will not heed the tune of the charmer,
however skillful the enchanter may be.
- ⁶Break the teeth in their mouths, O God;
tear out, O LORD, the fangs of the lions!
- ⁷Let them vanish like water that flows away;
when they draw the bow,
let their arrows be blunted.
- ⁸Like a slug melting away as it moves along,
like a stillborn child, may they not see the sun.
- ⁹Before your pots can feel [the heat of] the thorns—
whether they be green or dry—
the wicked will be swept away.
- ¹⁰The righteous will be glad when they are avenged,
when they bathe their feet
in the blood of the wicked.
- ¹¹Then men will say,
"Surely the righteous still are rewarded;
surely there is a God who judges the earth."

In this psalm, David speaks against the unjust judges and rulers who have allied themselves against him. We are not told the occasion David had for writing the psalm, but many commentators believe that David is

speaking to those judges and officials who supported Saul in his pursuit to kill David. There are three sections to this psalm. First, David states his complaint (vss. 1–5); then, he prays to God for judgment to come upon the wrongdoers (vss. 6–8); finally, he predicts the result (vss. 9–11).

First, David expresses his amazement at the injustice of the officials: **“Do you rulers indeed speak justly? Do you judge uprightly among men? No, in your heart you devise injustice, and your hands mete out violence on the earth”** (vss. 1–2). David’s amazement stems from the fact that the primary purpose of government officials is to administer justice: to **“speak justly”** and **“judge uprightly”**. All acts of injustice are bad, but especially those which are perpetrated by those who are ordained to maintain justice. These officials not only failed to properly administer justice, they **“devised”** to do **“injustice”**. They did not fail in their occupations through ignorance or even negligence, rather they failed through wickedness. Moreover, they were corrupt inside and out, as they devised injustice in their **“hearts”**, and meted out violence with their **“hands”**.

David points out that their wickedness began very early in life: **“Even from birth the wicked go astray; from the womb they are wayward and speak lies”** (vs. 3). “No wonder they act so unrighteously, for their very natures and principles are corrupt from their birth; they are the wicked offspring of sinful parents” [Pool, in Plumer, 599]. I suppose, given the innate depravity of all men, we should not be surprised to see wickedness in them when we encounter it. As God told Noah: **“Every inclination from [man’s] heart is evil from childhood”** (Gen. 8:21). “What parent’s heart has not ached at infallible evidence of a tendency to falsehood in his offspring? It requires the best precepts and examples, enforced by the highest authority and the most steadfast government to save children and youth from growing up to be arrant liars” [Plumer, 600]. Surely this makes a case for the strictest parental discipline, supported by Biblical teaching, and much prayer, so that our children may throw off their inheritance from Adam, and embrace the righteousness that can be theirs through Jesus Christ.

The unjust rulers chose to persevere in evil: **“Their venom is like the venom of a snake, like that of a cobra that has stopped its ears, that will not heed the tune of the charmer, however skillful the enchanter may be”** (vss. 4–5). The injustice they practiced was deadly, as David points out here—as deadly as **“the venom of a snake.”** Moreover, they were obstinate in their evil, purposely stopping their ears so as to make reformation impossible, just as a cobra that will not listen cannot be tamed by a snake charmer.

Having described their evil, David next prays that God would bring His judgment upon them: **“Break the teeth in their mouths, O God; tear out, O LORD, the fangs of the lions!”** (vs. 6). He prays first that they be rendered powerless in their evil deeds, just as a lion with broken teeth is essentially harmless. “If they have no capacity for good, at least

deprive them of their ability for evil" [Spurgeon, on vs. 6]. "However affluent and mighty the wicked may now be, God can at any moment make them entirely powerless" [Plumer, 603].

David prays next that their scheming would come to nothing: **"Let them vanish like water that flows away; when they draw the bow, let their arrows be blunted"** (vs. 7). "It is as easy for God to scatter all our foes, as it is for Him to dissipate the mists of the morning, or to maintain the law, by which heaps of water separate from each other, seeking their own level, and thus entirely losing their power" [Plumer, 603].

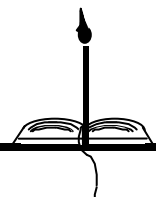
David continues: **"Like a slug melting away as it moves along, like a stillborn child, may they not see the sun"** (vs. 8). "Every unregenerate man is a miscarriage. He misses the true form of God-made manhood; he corrupts in the darkness of sin; he never sees or shall see the light of God in purity, in heaven" [Spurgeon, on vs. 8].

In the final section of the psalm, David predicts the demise of the unjust officials: **"Before your pots can feel [the heat of] the thorns—whether they be green or dry—the wicked will be swept away"** (vs. 9). Their judgment will come quickly, before they are ready for it.

David also predicts the reaction of the righteous to the demise of the unjust officials: **"The righteous will be glad when they are avenged, when they bathe their feet in the blood of the wicked"** (vs. 10). This is difficult language for a lot of people. It is the language of a warrior, for David was a man of war. David uses a battlefield image, where the victor walks through the blood of the defeated. Make no mistake, after a battle, it is much better to be a victor, than to be numbered with the defeated. And David was in a battle, for his foes, those allied with Saul, were trying to kill him. However, David did not go out of his way to shed blood. David had opportunities to kill Saul, but he chose to let the Lord execute justice.

To conclude, David speaks of the reaction people will have when they see how God works out the situation: **"Then men will say, 'Surely the righteous still are rewarded; surely there is a God who judges the earth'"** (vs. 11). There are times when God's justice is not fully executed here on earth (for this, we can all thank God for His grace). Then again, there are times when God works His justice, intervening in the affairs of men. "If no sin were punished here, we might be tempted to think there was no God, or that He was not just. And if all sin were adequately punished, how could we believe in the divine mercy?" [Plumer, 604]. In David's case, God's intervention would strengthen men's faith in the righteousness of God, as they say: **"Surely the righteous still are rewarded; surely there is a God who judges the earth."** "There is a God who does not entirely defer judgment till the judgment-day; but executes judgment now, even in this earth; and thus continues to give such a proof of His hatred to sin and love to His followers that every considerate mind is convinced of it" [Clarke, on vs. 11]

A Meditation: The Spiritual Chemist



A Meditation Upon a Crumb Going the Wrong Way by William Spurstowe (ca. 1666)

What more mean and contemptible thing can there be than a single crumb, either in regard of its doing the least hurt, or effecting the least good; and yet, like the tongue, which James saith, is a little member, and boasts great matters: in the mouth (it is true) it has scarce substance enough to be felt; but, in the throat, it is such as can hardly be endured. If it descend into the stomach, it can contribute nothing to the support of life; but, if it miss the due passage to it, how often doth it threaten death, and sometimes also effect it? O, how frail and mutable is the life of man; which is not only jeopardized by instruments of war and slaughter, which are made to destroy, but by a hair, a raisin-stone, a feather, a crumb, and a thousand such inconsiderable things, which have a power to extinguish life, but none to preserve it? How necessary then is it to get grace into the heart, when the life that we have hangs thus continually in suspense before us? And, how circumspect should we be of small sins, which create as great dangers to the soul, as the other things can to the body? They that live in the pale of the Church perish more by silent and whispering sins, than by crying and loud sins, in which, though there be less infamy, there is oft times the greater danger, in regard they are most easily fallen into, and most hardly repented of: like knots in fine silk, which are sooner made than in a cord or cable, but with far more difficulty are unloosed again. Let us therefore (who often say that a man may live of a little) think also of how much less a man may die, and miscarry, not in his body only but in his soul also.

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Furthering Godliness

"It was the practice of our Saviour, who left us a blessed pattern therein, to be always furthering godliness. When bread was mentioned to Him, upon it He dissuaded His disciples from the leaven of the pharisees, Matt. 16:5-6. When water was denied Him by the Samaritan woman, He forgets His thirst, and seeks to draw her to the well-spring of happiness, John 4:10.... When people came to Him for bodily cures, how constantly doth He mind the safety of their souls: 'Thou art made whole, go sin no more,' or, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee.' He went about doing good; in the day-time working miracles and preaching, in the night-time he often gave himself to meditation and prayer."

-- George Swinmock (1627-1675)

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